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ex

october 1995

FICTION

AMANDA MARCHAND

ARTHUR & MARILOUISE KROKER

ARTICLE

POETRY ON THE WEB

BY DAN MITCHELL

INTERVIEW WITH

ARTHUR & MARILOUISE KROKER



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a technical turning

the question concerning technology...

writing derives from a scratching, wound, and confident as we are only in some kind of apparatus, or revealing, only a skeleton is obsolescent. so discourse is obsolescent. there goes all my grad work. better buy a modem. better buy a... polly wants a... the ideology of the virtual class. oops, inherited one. (modem or ?) Corey's gone (to Japan, which is very high tech and faster modernity, faster.) help!

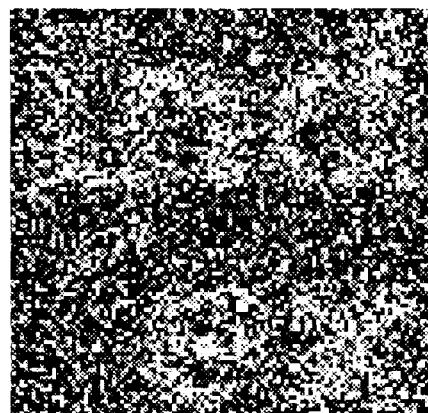
this is our virtual high tech speed freak'n issue. but it's still late. but it's still dirty. and repeats itself. varies, repeats, diverges, digresses—all that shit we receive in [e]mail. *can ya believe it?* is it so unsettling our uncertain discerning attachment to origin/ality or is anality it (the problem?)

our desires imperil us and our wicked ways will bring us nothing but trouble, that starts with "t" which rhymes with "p" which stands for pool

i was looking for you because i wanted to give you some cake, got some, got to

some idiolect, hooked on junk, we played techno music while laying it out. laying ourselves—if i put my body into a machine i want it to be a dirty body when it comes out the other side. written, thank you very much, going dancing, eating cake. faster transporter tubes, faster a generation whose earliest memory is television. or, less often, music. hope it shows. we were always already repeating ourselves and too late to uncertain ends anyway—whitenoisetiltheendofthepage

Trish Salah



next month in index:
fiction by Robert Majzels,

a feature on text-based
visual art

review picks from UPS

& by the way

index got to have its cake and eat it too. for that we have to thank: Reena Almoneda-Chang, Chris Bell, Jack Biswell AKA DJ Beets, Tammi Bowney, Jake Brown, Colin Christie, CKUT, danger books, Marci Denesiuk, Pat Dillon, Lee Gotham, Patrick Gusway, Lisa Hardin, Catherine Herrmann, Adeena Karasick, Catherine Kidd, Robert Majzels, Atif Siddiqi, Gil Salvador, Gail Scott, Galerie Stornaway, Elyse Tera, Priya Thomas, Underground Press Store, Garnet Willis, Drew Wodinsky & everyone who came also, for their production assistance on this issue, *index* would like to thank Samantha Anderson, Glenn Gear, Elaine Mari, Grant Loewen, & Anne Stone

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June sits hunched in a ball figure on the floor beside the soft mat. Her body is rolled and round like she is sending strong thoughts to her center so they will multiply and then pour out her eyes when she looks at you. June does not look at anyone these days, only sometimes when she is in the mood. People think she is angry but she is only preoccupied as if she were in the middle of a very complicated math calculation. Today she is sitting just beside the mat, head down, like wrapping herself up as one might wrap a gift although there are no ribbons and the paper is only the shell of herself which wants to curl off. Maybe this is what she waits for, June, for that shell to crinkle crinkle crinkle and peel and then, June wonders, would she be old.

Lovely kit cat jumps onto the kitchen window ledge. June looks back into the green Siamese eyes that hold you like a pounce.

June is a body in the wind. June is a body about to peel. June is a body full that has struck out. June is a body the color of a ripe peach and her spine bends.

June waits for the man in the top hat to come back. She moves out of her pose, stretching her neck for a moment, and lights a pipe with her long white fingers. Her hands shake. She is a fluff in the wind. She cannot fight the winds that blow around her kitchen.

again

by Amanda Marchand

Sometimes June talks to her pots hanging on the wall in the kitchen, brass, gleaming off the white walls. Sometimes she wears a pot on her head as if she were going to the trenches and the bullets fly all around her in a flurry of non-understanding. June likes to pretend she is a man, wearing a pot on her head, smoking a pipe, doing chin-ups until the blood cracks into the skin of her face.

A few days ago, June and a friend crawl together into bed with a boy who is the centre of gravity, so really it is more like they both land in his gravity-centered arms and the friend says, "His skin is soft, isn't it, June?" kissing his neck, chest, shoulder with June, and June answers, yes, that his skin is soft. The girls talk to each other, laughing, chatting, each focused on a task, a nipple, the lobe of an ear, as if the boy were not there between them like a boy between them. And June does not have to bend her gaze because the moon is out in the hollow winter sky like a crisp clear bonnet and the curtained darkness in the room saves her from any disappearing. The two kiss the boy's mouth sepa-

rately, one at a time, taking turns, like a pendulum swinging, and so back and forth while the two sometimes talk about how he is kissing or touching them but only in places they have agreed upon.

Walking into the chilly dark room, his door left ajar, they go toward separate sides of the bed. The moment they let go of each other's hand is when that good night threatens most by coming, for the first time, between them.

June is not pouring out as she thought she would. She walked in trembling and now she is only following a path. The bed holds all three, but barely. The boy doesn't speak, only to answer in staccato sentences, and later, he will smoke a cigarette by the fire burning to ash.

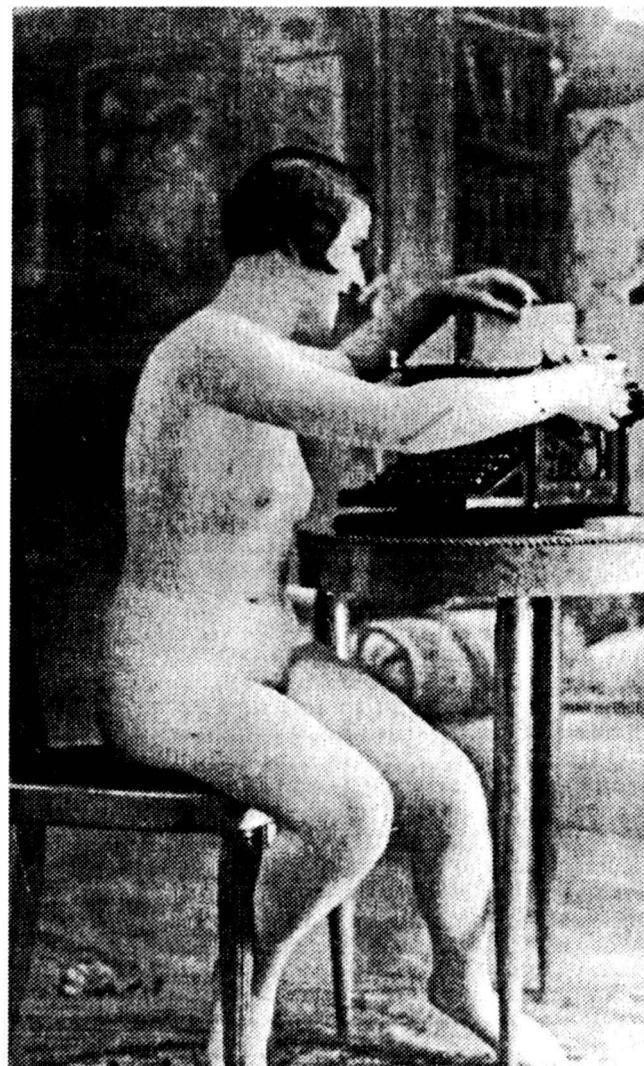
...looks at her across the bed. Says, "I love you, June." June looks back — a piercing star — is dizzied, it is — as if the whole night were upon her, as if she had gazed out at the darkest hour and light streamed into her eyes. She is blind. June is blinded by the single star. Singled out

and blinded and left clawing. This is why they can live together in the world as if trust were not such a fragile thing possibly ready to explode their whole contained lives in one single misguided movement. The boy magnet at the center between them, drawing them together and making the whole double bed spin as if it might take off in orbit at any small cough and throw them each centripetally towards oblivion. Emotions are so precise in this closed room, but no one is able yet to define what it is they are feeling. The only sound is the brand new sound of old tired old tired promise and the taste of salt.

Later he says, "This is why I didn't want to play," because things have gone a little off and no one quite knows how to climb back up there on the ledge. Hanging from toes and fingertips — luckily June has been doing chin-ups; she has no trouble just hanging on suspended for a while, her muscles like lumps in the throat. And even later, her friend says to June (and June agrees), that he was harsh to have kept them both there in the beginning trembling at his sides while he reveled in his power, as if they were the sacrificial lambs and not he. The

boy magnet, shirtless already, as if expecting to be seduced, lying right there on his back, secure, propped on pillows, elbows, wings to his head.

The next morning he tells them about the cabane à sucre he



worked at for a weekend with beer as pay, tapping all the bleeding maples with buckets and metal taps. How the tree sap begins to run in the spring with the first thaw, how the sap is collected in buckets but not too much or the tree dies. June feeling her two feet very naked

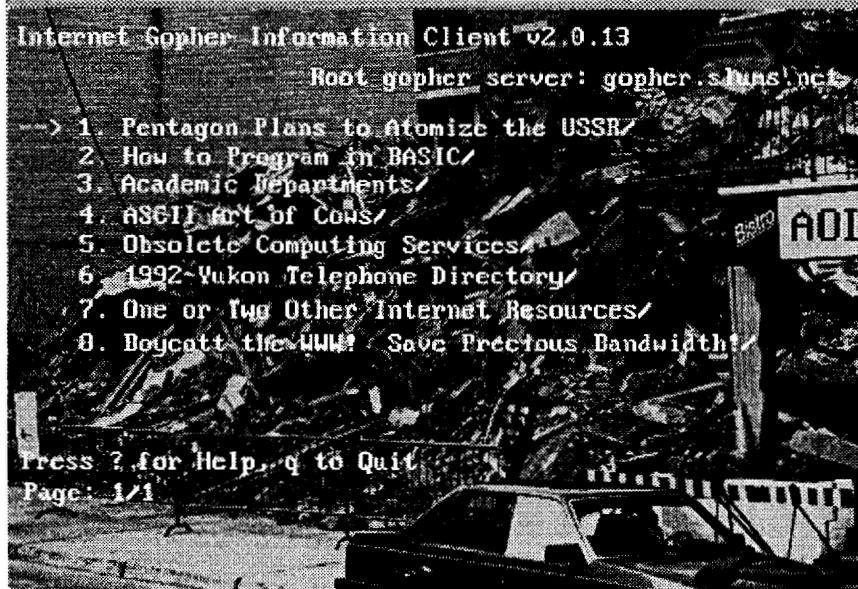
under the breakfast table.

June breathes in the strong pipe smoke and it seems to give her more substance. Her spine straightens out a little more, the Siamese arching like a bow in the window, and then June is bending again, into the wood of the floor, no pot lid on her head to dispel the spray of shrapnel, bending into the planks like the only flat place to rest her mind. Her movements are generous as if she has been dancing under a blood sun and she is fluid the way that type of dancing places you at the top of any mountain. In the kitchen, quiet and still except for the occasional movement, she is like a dancer on an experimental desert winding her body in the sand and thick dusty air, a dancing stillness that sets itself inside you, like you have just consumed a meal of smoke and feel full.

Amanda Marchand is a writer and photographer currently living in Montreal. She recently returned from the Bahamas where she lived for a year and a half while working on a screenplay about the 1837 Lower Canada rebellion.

Slumming in Gopher Space

Leif Harmsen emails from London to ask if we've gone slumming in gopher space. Seems that since the development of Netscape, the gopher has been abandoned and, like a telematic post-cursor of those empty American inner cities before it, every-



Gopher much anyway, too passive and archival and information-serious, but I check it out, and it's true. You float down empty pixel hallways of data circa 1993, tomes sometimes fall off unattended shelves, the turnstiles are covered with guck from gallium arsenate in its decaying stage, the registration desk stands empty with signs everywhere of hasty flight, and whirlpool storms of dust balls swirl through the digital air. Sort of like the Texas panhandle after the tornado, when you peek your head out of the basement squinting at the Day of the Living Dead sunlight, the land is empty from horizon to horizon, and you just don't know whether you're at the end of all things or the beginning again and again of the big rebuilding.

Vectoring through the vacant storage vaults of the Gopher, no one is around, you can hear your voice echo as it lazily accelerates its sonic way through the matrix, but like a good cyber-citizen who wants to stay alive for one last go-round on the mall strips of the Web, you wear your hard helmet as protection against falling data beams.

I'm outta here.

a lot of healing. It's called Slash N'Burn. Cut long slits down your arms or legs, will do, pour a bit of gasoline into the wounds, and then ignite the flesh. Now, don't let it burn too long, we're not talking about flesh arson here, about burning down the whole barn of the body in a massive end-of-the-century conflagration, but about pain with a recuperative purpose. As Denise explains: the real joy of inflicting pain on your own body lies in the pleasure of the healing process.

It's almost addictive. Cut the flesh, pour on gas, watch it burn, and then eagerly anticipate the long, slow healing powers of the body. The body in San Francisco, then, is all about *cynical healing*, intensifying the pain of the flesh to get one last hit of the angel wings of bodily feeling.

Shopping for Pain

We're sitting in a cyber-coffee bar in San Francisco talking to Denise. A dancer by night and an artist by day, Denise is strikingly beautiful in a delicate, porcelain-like way: tall, slim with shoulder-length auburn hair, pierced nose, lip, and, of course, a single eyebrow. At one point she stood up, turned with her back towards us, displaying magnificent tattoos in the form of multi-colour angel wings that went from her shoulder-blades down to the small of her back in the colours of the most exquisite medieval stained glass, and all this out by slender red scars splayed up and down her arms.

We ask about the scars and she tells us about the latest SM scene in the City. It seems these days that in the hip areas of San

Francisco the body cybernetic is out-of-date, unplugged from outlaw consciousness and allowed to float off into the East where the tech-hype is only now getting underway. What's really new in San Francisco these days is some pain cut with

any flesh, really any flesh, really any flesh.

Windows on the Virtual:

Thomas Jelonek and Trish Salah in conversation with Arthur and Marilouise Kroker

Arthur and Marilouise Kroker are cultural theorists and net workers, as well as the editors of *CTheory*, an online journal, and of the New World Perspectives series of political/theoretical texts. They recently spoke and performed at ISEA, the International Symposium on Electronic Art.

Trish: I'd like to begin by asking you to speak briefly about your experience at ISEA.

Arthur: ISEA is sort of a nomadic equivalent of *Ars Electronica*, and I think until this year it mainly involved people in the arts, in arts bureaucracy. This year they really have tried to involve a lot of theorists, to have more politically leaning discussions.

We presented a piece on digital flesh and on the role of the electronic artist in developing bodies for the twenty-first century: what does it mean for programmers at Soft Image, MIT, Cyberware etc to be developing prototypes for digital flesh and not thinking of the consequences? There is this ethical break at the end of the century, between human flesh and digital flesh, which is of tremendous significance.

Trish: Picking up on the idea of metamorphosing bodies and digitizing flesh, I'm wondering what political practice you see coming out of feminism in relation to virtual re/constructions of bodies.

Marilouise: A lot of people interested in VR are unhappy with their bodies, and all they're doing is taking a marketed paradigm and putting that body into the computer. They're taking the body that was dirty and making it clean. There's no real change. I call them Cyberboys. I don't think there's any kind of helpful project there, for feminism, or even for transforming the body.

Arthur: There are also people like Lynn Hershman. She's a film maker who gave a presentation on virtual identities. Her project is very close to the thesis of *The Last Sex* which is about a sex which is neither male nor female generically, but which begins to

float in a way not unlike culture today, which is recombinant. Her notion of virtual reality and the information economy is that you really can float in someways and live in these ambivalent spaces, with degrees of uncertainty. The space of the third sex is where virtual identity is. The tech community is clearly split between the Cyberboys who are unconscious of the project of rethinking the body and who are projecting this very old ideological notion of undisturbed sexuality and people who are deeply conscious of the notion of recombinant identity and sexuality, and approach it from a very critical, often playful stand point.

Trish: As compared to metaphysics of discourse or ideology, do you find in virtuality greater possibility for an activist imaginary?

Arthur: Yes. For myself discourse is a really obsolescent language. You can think of Foucault's language of discourse of the flesh as associated with the third grade of industrialization, which is the age of simulation. I think there has been a fundamental rupture in experience with the emergence of digital reality and the literal virtualization of the flesh of the human species. If part of you is downloaded onto the Net and stored in data banks you enter into a different phase of life that is typified by virtualization. This rendering of human beings subordinate to the processing machines represents a fundamental rupture, a refusal of discourse itself. Our thought is about the end of discourse and the beginning of the virtualization of the body, of flesh.

We just wrote a book, *Hacking The Future*, using the medium of short stories. Kathy Acker says

that we're the new novelists because in some ways we've reinvented the notion of the short story in that fact and fiction are allowed to fold in on one another, reverse one another. We use our bodies as mediums in terms of what we feel ourselves, our lacunae experiences of what we don't understand or are disturbed by. We present a lot of short stories on virtual flesh, stories on cyber sex, pregnant robots; all of which talk about this ambivalent space where the body is half flesh and half data. The architecture of this age is not the old age of Foucauldian discourse anymore. That's finished.

Trish: What about those who do not have access to the Net? What sort of rift is there between citizens who are virtual on some level and those who are not? How do you attend to those who are stuck in the remnants of the Real?

Marilouise: That's a question we thought about very deeply before we wrote the book. We wrote a piece called "Windows On What" and we sent it out through the Net on *CTheory* the day that Windows '95 was in the stores. It was about Windows '95, Bill Gates etc., about the virtual class and the surplus class.

Arthur: We compared the two cities of Redman, Washington, where Microsoft is located, and Srebrenica. That was the day that Srebrenica fell, in which ten thousand people were slaughtered. We talked about what this means; the privileged movement of the techno-elite which benefits from the virtualization of flesh and sees itself as an honoured collaborator in dumping human life behind it while most human beings are living in surplus bodies and surplus flesh, sometimes living under genocidal conditions.

Thomas: Most people saw those events as independent or as linked only by coincidence...

Arthur: Well, we see them both as coincidence and as deeply entangled events. Why can't they be both? Geert Lovink talks about the emergence of the new Europe—white western Europe emerging under the sign of "organized innocence". This is about taking a middle class euro-mind and shutting yourself down in a bunker; trying to have a safe

undisturbed life and get through to death with a minimum of inconvenience and enjoy your own private pleasures with no public consciousness. So you have organized innocence in the middle class of western Europe and at the same time you have genocide on the margins of Europe in Bosnia. Lovink has also presented a video from resistance groups in the Zagreb underground, young kids really, who have real consciousness of genocide and the complicity of their nation in genocide. They represent a point of moral resistance. So, for him, these are not accidental events; these are part of the internal logic of history; not causally related but analogically related. This logic works out at a broader level as the emergence in the world today of surplus bodies on the one hand and of virtual bodies on the other. This divides the world: it's a realistic division of power and suffering today.

Thomas: Do the people who lined up at midnight in the rain for Windows '95 care about the people in Srebrenica or actually even know about them?

Marilouise: I think they would say, "Oh yes we care, definitely, and we can care when we turn the T.V. on..."

Trish: Could you talk about your decision to move *CTheory* online?

Marilouise: We published a print journal for fifteen years. We stopped doing that because we realized it was no longer a journal, it was turning into a book. We couldn't afford to bring it out more than twice a year, the articles would be a year or two old, and we couldn't break even. We were always dependent on grants. We spent a year thinking about it and decided we really wanted a journal, not something that only came out once or twice a year. We didn't know what to expect because when we talked to people they said a journal is a journal, it has to be something you can read in bed and so on... But that hasn't been true at all. People have been able to access it like they never could before, in over a hundred countries. We're associated with people like Bosnia-Net and in this way *CTheory* can be much more political. There's this immediacy. We did the "Windows on What" and we got responses

the next day.

Arthur: *CTheory* is an intellectual revolution because it provides an immediacy of intensive reflection. The whole project of *CTheory* is to allow a reflection on technology, culture and politics. We pioneered the essay format in hypertext but also what we call "events", short articles which bear immediately on media situations. We're about to do a web version, a genuinely hyper-linked web version of all the articles we've put out.

Thomas: With regards to *CTheory*, the idea is that technology allows you to comment on it immediately and make the information timely especially to the people who are using it. But is technology moving too fast for such reflection to be possible?

Arthur: It's moving very slowly actually. The surface effect seems to be quick mutation of new technology into products, but the internal logic moves in two ways which are really inertial. One has been a real slow down of new developments, because of the economic necessities of commercial exploitation as businessmen like to say. The managing editor of *Wired*, John Battelle, likes to say the age of Net Utopians is over, the age of using the net for global communications is over, and it's time for the politics of consolidation, for real commercialization of the net. The last two years have witnessed the business community's agenda, the agenda of the virtual class, really gaining hegemony, and the logic behind that is really old-fashioned, deeply inertial. Our thought has been to resist that inertia and open up spaces for artistic and political experimentation and to let the Net be the Net. That's what *CTheory* is.

Thomas: But as you see business infiltrating parts of the Net, parts of the Net becomes redundant. Use-Net which was once somewhat vital, has now become so much advertising. It's unreadable, and it has fallen by the wayside. So in the past year people have moved to the world-wide web, next year who knows what new developments there might be...

Marilouise: But what's good is that people are actually doing it. They're figuring out other ways of dealing with the infiltration. I

find that really positive. They're not just going to say, "Ok, we give up," and turn it over to business.

Arthur: But it is true to say there are huge areas of abandonment and that is not uninteresting. For us, there are lots of reflections on abandoned sites which are interesting. Dutch squatters have a secret project under way to squat the Net. Their idea is that you squat abandoned sites, much as you would squat warehouses or abandoned apartment buildings in post Second World War Europe. There's lots of empty data space for really interesting dark fiber events to take place.

Now, I think the significant debate is who is the virtual class? What are its members? What is their world wide ideological agenda? Why and how have they so successful in putting government after government under the sign of this raging fever towards technotopia? How have they got leading businesses in every country to have the population applaud them as they sell themselves out to world imperialist powers like Microsoft buying Soft Image in Montreal? This massive colonization of Canadian cyberspace happens and everybody applauds this as a sign that we've been allowed to join the Empire. These are really problematic cultural politics.

Thomas: Isn't it just that people are so afraid of being a disenfranchised class, of being say, the Bosnians? The fear is that if we don't join we'll just be left further and further back?

Arthur: That is exactly the ideology of the virtual class: to say that you have to get on cyberspace or you'll be crushed. But the Bosnians aren't saying that. If you go to Sarajevo, our friends tell us, there's a deeply vibrant resisting culture of people who have been steeled in human suffering, who don't expect anything from the western world because people here are too bunkered down in organized innocence. These people are a model of political courage in the world, of a people struggling to be autonomous on their own terms. So I think there's a lesson to be learned...

First, you need a computer with a modem. Second, you need an account at one of the many dial-up Net providers in the city or at a University. Specify you want **WWW** access. Competition is forcing the prices lower every day. The software you need to surf is all available for free on the Net. All of the resources here were gathered using **Netscape 1.1N**. Once you're on, just use the numerous search engines available. The **Word** in all its forms and functions is ubiquitous on the Net. If you are already on the Net you know how unnecessary this kind of print pointer really is.

Read Me First

The **World Wide Web (WWW)** is the fastest growing part of the Net and is host to thousands of poems, literary zines and textual experiments. The **WWW** is a hyperlinked network of millions of computer servers which integrate text and graphics, and if you have the computer power, sound and movies.

I'm not even going to try to be comprehensive. This is at best a departure point for finding literary sites on the Net, specifically the **World Wide Web (WWW)**. The easiest starting point is **Yahoo** - a comprehensive Net list. Point your browser toward www.yahoo.com

Who's Afraid of the World-Wide Web?

First, you can find a surprising number of collected works and commentary relating to major established writers. While this isn't groundbreaking - just barely exciting - its still a great resource for students who have failed to get to the library and have to get an essay in by 8 a.m. on **William Blake's** poetry

(www.aa.net/~urizen/blake.html).

Or James Joyce

(www.unidata.com/%7Eucc01/Joyce/).

Or Maya Angelou

(web.msu.edu/lecture/angelou.html)

A good place to start looking for major writers on the Net is

Author, Author

(www.li.net/~scharf/writers.html).

They have a very comprehensive list of authors and resources for research.

If A Poet Reads A Poem In Cyberspace Does Anyone Hear It?

An infinitely more cool use of the Net in the **Word** world is the growing use of Net technology in the creation of the **Word**. Can you say

Telepoetics® ? Telepoetics®

(www.tezcat.com/~malachit/index.html)

a poetry movement that uses modern technology in the employ of the modern imagination. Technology, ie. videophones & the Net, are used to create poetic events in cyberspace - two or more physical locations are linked for sound and image and poets swap poems across geography. The home of the Canadian **Telepoetics®** movement is the **Edgewise Café** (wimsey.com/edgewise/edgewise/) in Vancouver. **Heather Haley** (hhaley@direct.ca) runs the show, and she learned her craft from the mother of all **Telepoets**, **Merilene Murphy** from **Hollywood, California**.

Telepoetics® will scare some people with its high tech-to-poetry ratio. However, if your favourite childhood toy was the etch-a-sketch then **Telepoetics®** is right up your alley. The ghost in your machine will thank you. Word on the street is that there will be a **Telepoetics®** event coming to a venue near you soon. Keep your eyes on your **Index**. (Look for **Index_Online** on **Babylon**, the local BBS or e-mail Index_Online@babylon.montreal.qc.ca)

Also, B.A.W.P.: Best-quality Audio Web Poems

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offers audio spoken-word recorded at readings across North America.

How Hyper Is Your Text?

The best resource for all things hyper on the Net is a page put together by **Prentiss Riddle** (riddle@rice.edu) **For The Search For Some Hypertext Fiction** point your browser to is.rice.edu/~riddle/hyperfiction.html#honest for all things hyper. Also, check out **Vannevar Bush's** groundbreaking article on hypertext from the July, 1945 issue of *The Atlantic Monthly*. The original text is available at www.isg.sfu.ca/~duchier/misc/vbush/.

E-Zine my E-Zine

The literary 'zine revolution (Chap-E-Books?) has jumped on the **WWW** as a publishing form that is cheap and easy. Distribution is simple and the number of 'zines on the web is staggering. They range from the already established literary magazine (for example, **Blood & Aphorisms** can be found at www.io.org/~blood/phpl.cgi?Home.html) to the ultra alternative. One zine that I especially like is **io magazine** (www.altx.com/io/). **io magazine** is **The Digital Magazine of Literary Culture** and the latest issue features an interview of **Kathy Acker** by **R.U.Serious of Mondo 2000** fame. A good place to start for 'zines on the Net is **FactSheet Five** (kzsu.stanford.edu/~uwi/f5e/) **FactSheet Five** has been the hard-copy zine resource for years and is now applying its listings skills to the Net. Also **Yahoo** (www.yahoo.com) has a huge list. Another very comprehensive list of zines on the net is **John Labovitz's E-Zine List** at www.meer.net/~johnl/e-zine-list/index.html.

Poems for Dollars

If you don't feel comfortable reading poetry you haven't paid for, **Merike Lugus** and **Rod Anderson**

continued

have their own Poetry Room (eagle.ca/~roda/RodMerArts/PoetryRoom.html) where you can download packets of six poems for a dollar. If 10,000 people downloaded their poems they would be two of the best paid poets in the world. It makes you think ...

Typical Net Disclaimer

The **WWW** is in a state of hyper-growth - things are added and changed everyday. Some or all of the **URLs** (Uniform Resource Locators - **WWW** addresses) may or may not be functioning by the time you read this. Even without any of them, a simple search with the keyword **Poetry** will keep you up for hours.

The Bottom Line

The **Word** virus is thriving on the Net. As with everything else on the Net the signal-to-noise ratio is high when it comes to poetry. There will always be bad poetry. There will always be good poetry. Now its all coming to the Net. The **WWW**, because it is inherently hypertextual, is a natural space for the **Word**. And so far its working. Log on and look around. The **Word** is out there.

The Bristol Poetry Page:
(Includes The 1995 US National Poetry Slam Page)

www.ssynth.co.uk/~rdy/poet_mag.html

Literary Research Tools On The Net: (Great Research Tools)
www.english.upenn.edu/~jlynch/research.html

eScene: The Worlds Best Online Fiction

www.e-text.org/zines/eScene

Intertext (Online Fiction)

www.e-text.org:80/zines/Intertext/

Grist (email them at Grist@grist.com)
www.phantom.com/~grist

Deep Breath: An Online Poetry Journal

199.17.134.71/db/files/cover.html

Surf This

Reviews

Word Goes Boom?

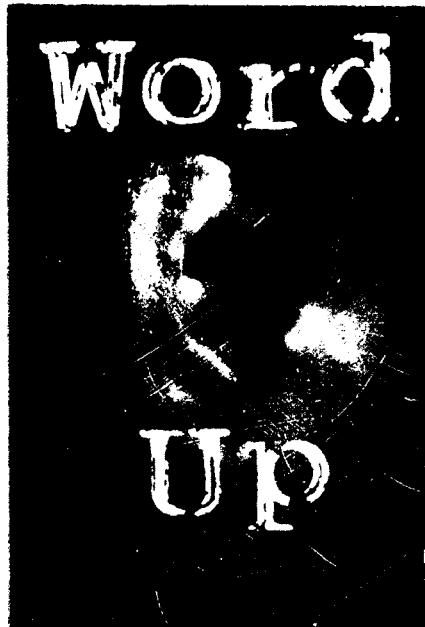
Trish Salah

Word Up

Various Artists

Virgin/EMI, 1995

One of the truisms of the recent "spoken word explosion" is that there is something like an explosion of spoken word performance taking place across North America. Maybe. I doubt it. Or, at least, I wonder what that means. Are people performing more? Are more people performing? And "more", more than what? More than the Beats? More than Rap? More than Dada? As far as I can tell the spoken word explosion amounts to people recording the shit and charging for it. Whatever. No more annoying than any other aspect of late capitalism...



Word Up is a spoken word cd. Famous, critically acclaimed, a lot of hype. Not to say there isn't fab stuff on it: Nuyorican Café MC Bob Holman's high-rep reverb laden "Lounge Chair" is a cool, wonky jazz poetry collage; Mecca Normal vocalist Jean Smith's "The Dogs" burns a hole in your ear and stinks of the best sort of nihilist

alienation; Toronto dubmaster Clifton Joseph's paean to "Monk" is phunkin' phat; Shawna Dempsey and Lori Millan's "What Does a Lesbian look like?" is wicked funny and cuts quick

But it's still a load of hype. This isn't to dwell on the cd's lamer tracks (though who could pass over Sheri D. Wilson's gawdawfull posturing in "I am a closet New Yorker") Generally, the word is solid. But most of the stronger writers are not newcomers—Lillian Allen, John Giorno and Jeannette Armstrong have been around for a while now. What's remarkable today is that people other than college radio nerds and the hardcore coffee clatche set are listening to them.

Despite the hype, *Word Up* does pay testament to this, the diversity and volume of the work is such that it defies attribution to one moment or tradition. I guess I'm just being bitchy about the "eventness" of it all. *Word Up...* performed by...the forerunners of the spoken word resurgence." If you enjoy the cd you'll be glad to know a *Word Up* book has been released by EMI; stay tuned for the major motion picture.

Pop Pop Pop Music

Andrew Burke

Popular Music – Style and Identity
edited by Will Straw,
Paul Friedlander,
Stacey Johnson
and Rebecca Sullivan

Centre for Research
on Canadian Cultural
Industries & Institutions, 1995

The conundrum facing academic theorists of pop music is whether the sense of urgency that the rapid cycles of production and consumption of pop product seemingly generates and demands (and is reflected in the music press) can be beneficially sacrificed for and replaced by theoretical insight. Compiled from papers given at the

1993 International Association for the Study of Popular Music (IASPM) conference, what *Popular Music – Style and Identity* lacks in articulating the manic pop thrill of listening it tries to make up for by accounting for the experience of listening by using the various vocabularies offered within the realm of cultural studies.

As the title of the collection suggests, and reflective of current debate within cultural studies, most of the articles, in one way or another, investigate notions of identity. A shift, however, has occurred. Less concerned with the fate of individual pop consumers and their listening subjectivity, these papers more often focus on listening communities and participation in pop as a collective experience. This has its origins in subcultural theory – the music of a subculture is the link between style and identity whether it be that style is the performative aspect of identity or that, perhaps more cynically, identity is merely residual of style.

Replacing the notion of subculture, though, is the concept of "scene". While a subculture is a fairly stable construct with rigid demands of those who participate within it, wherever they may be, a scene is a more ephemeral, fluid collective which is geographically site-specific. While Western definitions of pop may have dominated cultural studies previously, this collection shows a global initiative to extend the parameters of pop in order to account for local scenes. Karaoke falls under the umbrella of pop and is the most discussed topic here, with articles detailing the karaoke scenes in Tokyo, New York, Sydney and Sao Paolo.

The increase in emphasis on listening communities has also entailed a decrease in fascination with individual pop icons. There are no articles on Madonna, a figure who usually holds a tyrannical sway over the minds of cultural theorists. Rather than using global icons to generate falsely universal claims about pop phenomena, several writers focus on the local scenes as pop phenomena in action. This reverts back to the question of identity – although these icons may be models of identity and indicators of style, it is within the scene itself that the listeners

negotiate their individual identities.

Despite Simon Frith's claim to the contrary, it seems that the study of popular music is still dominated by sociology. While there does seem to be a shift in discussion from an analytics of pop (the effort to fathom "meaning") to a phenomenology of pop (the effort to account for the experience of listening), this shift plays into the hands of the sociologist. If we define the experience as fundamentally a community experience, then music is not so much the object of study as a variable differing from scene to scene. Despite the limitations of the musicologist and of textual criticism, there does seem to be a benefit of exploring the response of the individual listening subject, as liberated from a scene, to a specific pop text. It's not all in the song, nor all in the scene, but in the import lies somewhere in between.

Strange Carnalities

Lisa C. Hardin

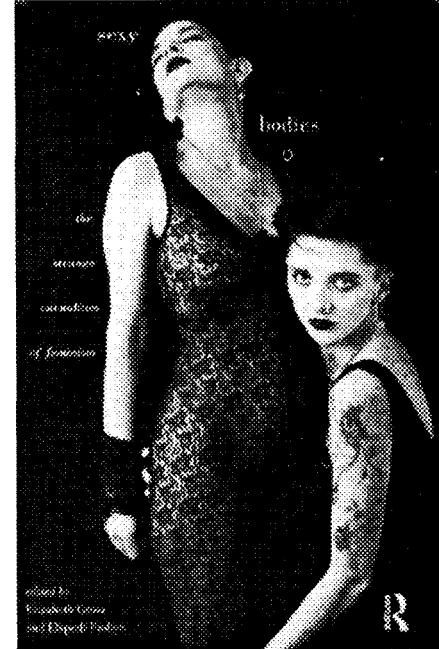
Sexy Bodies: the strange carnalities of feminism

Elisabeth Grosz and
Elspeth Probin, Eds.
Routledge and
Kegan Paul, 1995

Accessible and diverse, "perverse desire speaking (as) itself" is an accurate overall description of *Sexy Bodies: the strange carnalities of feminism*. Edited by Elisabeth Grosz and Elspeth Probin (authors of *Volatile Bodies* and *Sexing the Self*, respectively), this collection of critical, queer, feminist, erotic writings is exceptional, bringing embodied clarity to critical thinking.

Sexy Bodies transgresses the normative stylistic boundaries of academic language and prose, re-formulating rather than re-defining how we can speak and think and write, to "think in terms of becoming." Not content to have writing *about* sex and bodies, the editors asked contributors to write *as* sex and bodies, transforming nouns and adjectives into verbs: *to sex, to queer*. The result is energizing. From Diane Chisholm's "The Cunning Lingua of Desire" to Melissa Jane

Hardie's delicious exposure of Elizabeth Taylor's body, this book creates a live sexual/textual tangibility. In addition, unlike many theory books that can dryly and circularly spin us into fits of ideological frustration, this book accepts the indefinable, engorges us and consumes us. Much like good sex.



Sexy Bodies traverses a wide range of subjects and journeys, some from Montréal authors. Nicole Brossard's *La Nuit verte du parc Labyrinthe*, translated by Lou Nelson into English, is a luxurious passage through a night of women. Chantale Nadeau incorporates Deleuzian interpretations of masochism in her critique of the lesbian and s/m images of director Liliana Cavani. *Sexy Bodies'* explorations also include sexualizing space (Sue Best); crotch jewels in *The Raj Quartet* (Sabina Sawhney); virtual lesbians in the work of Jeanette Winterson (Lisa Moore); the music of "Ma" Rainey and Bessie Smith (Angela Y. Davis); animal sex (Grosz) and queer belongings (Probin).

Although the editors claim that *Sexy Bodies* is about "the weird and the strange," this book effectively contributes to their normalization, thus "making queer all sexualities." I savour this volume for its diversity in thought, culture, style, and vision of sexuality. Unstatic, *Sexy Bodies* definitely LIVES on my bookshelf.

Thursday, Oct. 5

No one will be sleeping, when the Insomniac crew rolls into town. Sky Gilbert, Dennis Denisoff, Diana Bryden, Mary Elizabeth Grace, Mac McArthur, Peter McPhee, Nancy Shaw, R.N. Vaughan & Death Waits will be reading at a launch for Insomniac Press' anthology of new Canadian writing *The Last Word*. 9:00pm @ Bistro 4 4040 St- Laurent. For more info call 428-1052

Sunday, Oct. 14

And that perennial hero of Canlit, that sparkling star of a six year old, who, although he cannot reach a door knob, has returned to vanquish more mean and nasties, yes, that's right, Jacob Two-Two is back and will be making an appearance at the Double Hook sounding suspiciously like Mordecai Richler. 1235A Greene Ave., 932-5093.

Tuesday, Oct. 17

Sad; so sad, those smoky-rose, smoky-mauve evenings of northern Autumn, sad enough to pierce the heart. In such times one could do worse than to lose one self to the charms of an amethyst. Amethyst tuesdays is an entrancing salon-lounge affair featuring performances, exhibits & invitee djs, with your first coctail included in the cover. Hosted by Atif Siddiqi & Salmon M. Husain on the 3rd tuesday of every month @ 8:00, *La Huerta*, 1355 Ste Catherine east.

Monday, Oct. 30

if the skin makes a free grammar, a chance to spell the air between comes so rarely, as opportunities as this. The Urban Wanderers Reading Series presents a rare reading by Nicole Brossard. The celebrated poet/ novelist/theorist will be reading with Jan Conn, James Boothroyd, Hugh Hazelton. *Gringos Errantes: Canadians in Latin America*. 9:00pm @ Bistro 4, 4040 St- Laurent, 844-6246.

Listings**Sunday, Oct. 1**

7:30 pm.

"Looking in the Mirror" series. Bar Lezard, Catherine Kidd, Dee Smith (dub poet), Debora Ann Franco with a violinist, Joelle Ciona, Maya Khankhoje, "Jake" and Shaughnessy Bishop-Stall. Contact Marnie Craig @ 846-3860.

Monday, Oct. 2

9:00 pm.

Urban Wanderer's Reading Series presents *"Border Crossings: Cross Genre Writing"* with Frances Itani, Mary di Michelle, Denise Roig, and Gerry Shikatani. Bistro 4. For info 484-3186.

Oct. 3-13

Mondays

A play by Michel Tremblay, "Ce a Ton Tourne, Laura Cadeiux". Theatre Cerculo Cabaret at Lion D'Or, 598-0709

Thursday, Oct. 5

8:00 pm.

Kamala Das, South Indian feminist author, presents *"The Writer as Emotional Revolutionary"*. Concordia de Seve Auditorium, 1400 de Maisonneuve W. For info contact Rita Heft @ 848-2015

8:00 pm.

The Fluffy Pagan Echoes perform at the Yellow Door, 3625 Aylmer. \$3. For info call 398-6243.

9:00 pm.

Launch for *"The Last Word"* edited by **Michael Holmes**. Bistro 4. Call Julie Chrysler for info @ 281-1052.

Friday, Oct. 6

9:00 pm.

Live Comic Art Jam, with **Bliss, Mystic Zealots, Blowhard, Madison Drive**. Stornaway, 1407 St. Alexandre. \$5. For info call 288-7075.

Saturday, Oct. 7

8:00 pm.

Harvey Ried from Maine. Renaissance man of folk music. Yellow Door, 3625 Aylmer. \$10 general, \$8 students and seniors. For info call 276-5605

Oct. 10 – Nov. 28

Tuesdays, 6:30–9:30 pm.

Ann Scofield's *Transformative Theatre: creativity workshops for women*. \$240 (performance experience unnecessary).

Wednesdays, 6:30–9:30.

Small Performances Workshop, \$240. For information or to pre-register, 278-4167

Thursday, Oct. 12

7:30 pm.

Poetry by **Chris Bell, Catherine Kidd and Julie Chrysler** at Double Hook. For info call 932-5093.

Listings soprattu

Saturday, Oct. 14

1-2:00 pm.

Double Hook presents **Mordecai Richler** reading from his new children's book, "Jacob Two-Two's First Spy Case". For info call 932-5093.

Sunday, Oct. 15

10:00 am.

Paragraphe and **the Gazette** present "Books and Breakfast". Ritz Carlton, \$20 + GST., Joanna Trollope, Jared Mitchell, Natalie Zinger. 845-5811

7:30 pm.

"*Looking in the Mirror*" series. Bar Lezard, for info contact Marnie Craig @ 846-3860

Monday, Oct. 16

7-9:00 pm.

FEWQ (Federation of English-lan-

guage Writers of Quebec) presents **Robert Kerr** who will discuss tax legalities for writers. Atwater Library. 934-2485

1:30 pm.

Jane and Tony Urquart at The Museum of Fine Arts, Maxwell Cummings Auditorium, 1379 Sherbrooke. \$10. For information and registration, 937-7937

9:00 pm.

Urban Wanderer's Reading Series presents, "Exodus: The Holocaust and the Road to Healing" with Endre Farkas, Monique Polak and tba. Bistro 4.

Tuesday, Oct. 17

6:00 pm.

McGill Beaty Memorial Lecture Series presents "Women Eat Last" by Catherine Bertini, executive director of UN world food program. Field House Auditorium, Rm 132, Leacock, 398-3992

Oct. 18-19

8:00 pm.

Atif Y. Siddiqi and **Urania Records** presents **Amethyst's Universe**, a live multi-disciplinary performance. Maison de la Culture Frontenac, 2550 Ontario E. Metro Frontenac. \$12 in advance, \$15 at door. Tickets available at L'Adrogyné and Cheap Thrills (Metcalfe).

Thursday, Oct. 19

6:00 pm.

Vernissage for Collage exposition by Pier LeFebvre and Steve Godin at Stornaway. 1407 St-Alexandre. 288-7075

9:00 pm.

FEWQ presents "Joust for Words", Champlain College, Lennoxville. 934-2485.

Oct. 19-28

Imitator **Jean Guy Moriau** at Lion D'Or. 598-0709.



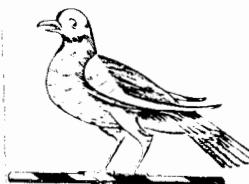
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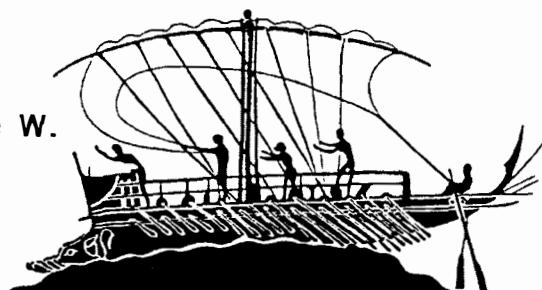
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Sunday, Oct. 22

10:00 am.

"Books and Breakfast" featuring
Stuart McLeanes, Ray MacGregor,
Denise Roig. Ritz Carlton, \$20 + GST.
845-5811.

Oct. 23 & 26

9:00 pm.

UWRS presents "The Finish Line:
1995" QSPELL Award Nominees.
Bistro 4.

Tuesday, Oct. 24

8:00 pm

Vox Hunt slam with MC Todd Swift;
a dance competition; word by Fortner
Anderson, Trish Salah; live music by
the Buzz Blast Off Trio & Priya
Thomas. \$3, \$5 for slam contestants
(7:30 sign up) @ Café So, 20 Rachel
west.

Thursday, Oct. 26

2 pm.

Eric Koch reads from his books
*Hillmar and Odette: Two stories from the
Nazi era*. Côte St.-Luc Public Library,
5851 Cavendish. For info contact
Elenor London @ 485-6900.

Sunday, Oct. 29

10:00 am.

"Books and Breakfast" featuring Ken

Dryden, Roy Atkey, Linda Leith. Ritz
Carlton, \$20 + GST. 845-5811.

7:30 pm.

"Looking in the Mirror". A
Halloween Party featuring **Chicago
Beau**. Bar Lezard. Contact Marnie
Craig @ 846-3860.

Monday, Oct. 30

9:00 pm.

UWRS presents *"Gringos Errantes"*

"Canadians in Latin America" with James
Boothroyd, Nicole Brossard, Jan
Conn, and Hugh Hazelton. Bistro 4.

Tuesday, Oct. 31

8:00 pm.

FEWQ (Federation of English-language
Writers of Quebec) presents
"Jouet for Words", Bistro 4. 934-2485

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Grey Matters	CKUT 90.3 FM	Thurs 7-8PM	Fortner Anderson.	Lectures.
Dromostexte	CKUT 90.3 FM	Thurs 8-9PM	Fortner Anderson.	Spoken Word
Books on Jewish Themes	CKUT 90.3 FM	Tues 7PM	Stanley Asher	Reviews.
Simply Speaking	CINQ 102.3 FM	Sat 10:00AM	Stanley Asher	Interviews.
Books on Popular Culture	CINQ 102.3 FM	Sat 9:30AM	Stanley Asher	Reviews.
Between the Covers	CBC 940 AM	Mon-Fri 10PM	Serialized novel readings.	
Saturday Spotlight	CBC 940 AM	Sat 5:08PM	Shelley Pomerance	Arts in Quebec.
Writers & Company	CBC 940 AM	Sun 3PM	Eleanor Wachtel	Literary figures.
Selected Shorts	WCFE 91.9 FM	Thurs 11AM	Actors read acclaimed short stories.	
Word Jazz	WCFE 91.9 FM	Thurs 11PM	Ken Nordine	Spoken Word
Tell Me A Story	WCFE 91.9 FM	Fri 7 PM	Contemporary authors reading their work.	

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Urban Wanderers Reading Series

monday, Oct. 2, 21h

**Border Crossings:
Cross Genre Writing**

monday, Oct. 16, 21h

**Exodus:
The Holocaust
and the Road to Healing**

monday, Oct. 23, 21h

& wednesday, Oct. 25, 21h

**"The Finish Line: 1995"
QSPELL Award Nominees.**

Oct. 30, 21h

**Gringos Errantes:
Canadians in Latin America**

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volume 2

number six

october 1995

Slumming in
Gopher Space

&

Stopping For Pain

Arthur & Marilouise

Kroker

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June Again

Amanda Marchand
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an interview with

Arthur & Marilouise
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Thomas Jelonek
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spoken word cd.
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Call 4 Submissions

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